

Stroke Survivor's Daughter Recruits Ambassadors for National Movement

Issue

Stroke awareness is very important to Ramona Pinckney because her mother had two strokes eight years ago. Her mother will soon be 81 years old, and fortunately, remains physically independent.

In South Carolina, the number one cause of death in the various geographic areas vacillates between cardiovascular disease (CVD) and cancer. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Region 8 mirrors this statistic, and is diligently working to address this issue by offering the American Heart Association's Power To End Stroke (PTES) evidenced-based program, proven to be effective in African-American faith-based communities.

South Carolina has a 3 percent prevalence of stroke for the entire state. Region 8, which consists of Beaufort, Jasper, Hampton and Colleton counties in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, has a 3.6 percent prevalence. Research has well documented that the African-American population is disproportionately affected by cardiovascular disease.

Intervention

After hearing a presentation on the PTES program while attending DHEC's Annual Diabetes/Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Symposium, Ramona decided to become a PTES Ambassador for Region 8. She received PTES training shortly thereafter, formalizing her ambassadorship, while she was in her last semester of graduate school obtaining a degree in advanced practice nursing. PTES became Ramona's Thesis for graduation, and her professors were inspired by her enthusiasm and passion for the project. Ramona facilitated her very first PTES presentation at a regional AME quarterly meeting in Hilton Head, where she successfully recruited 30 new ambassadors.

Impact

Ramona knows the devastating impact a stroke can have on victims and their loved ones. She is committed to making a difference in Region 8, but realizes that change must first begin with her. The more she became involved with the PTES program; the more she realized how much she was at risk by having hypertension and being overweight. Ramona has lost more than 15 pounds and has joined the YMCA since becoming an ambassador, because she realizes she must be the change she wants to see in the African-American community. Additionally, Ramona has met with their new Pastor and his wife over dinner to discuss what role they would play as new members of the church located on St. Helena Island. She very excitedly explained the PTES initiative and the major role it will play in increasing stroke awareness within the church and the surrounding community, and she received very favorable feedback. Ramona is looking forward to working closely with the Power To End Stroke Program and utilizing her time and talent needed to decrease the prevalence of stroke in Region 8.

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